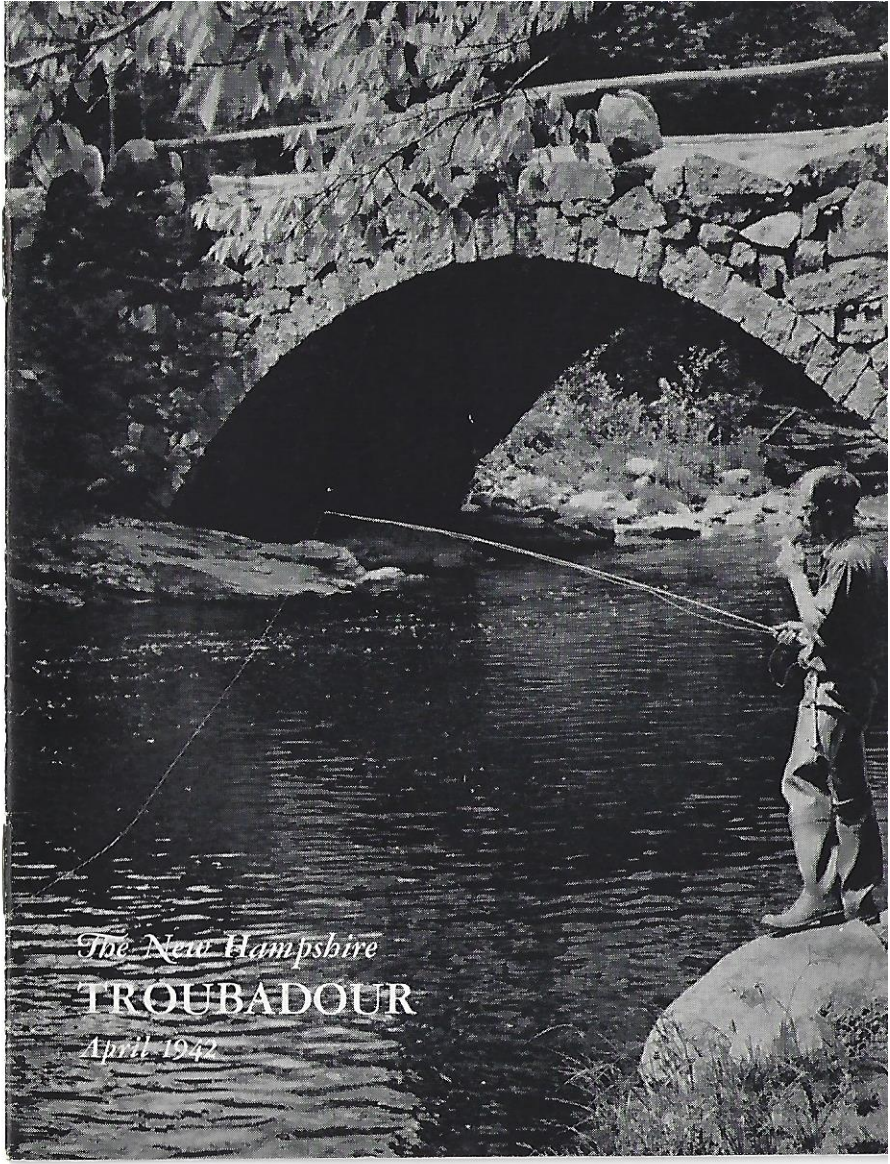
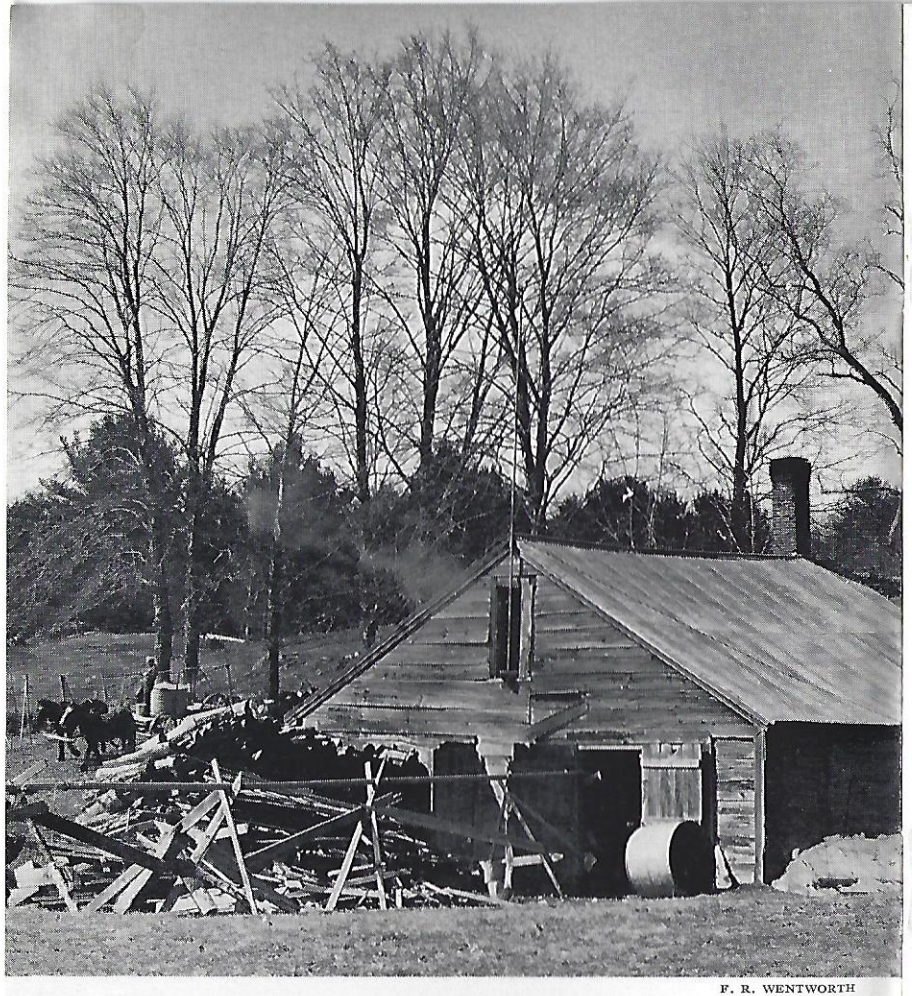


The New Hampshire

TROUBADOUR

April 1942



F. R. WENTWORTH

A New Hampshire Maple Sugar House. Here over wood fires burning continuously day and night the white boiling sap is turned into the golden syrup everyone enjoys. From 35 to 50 gallons of sap are required for a single gallon of fancy grade syrup.

The New Hampshire Troubadour

COMES TO YOU EVERY MONTH SINGING THE PRAISES OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, A STATE WHOSE BEAUTY AND OPPORTUNITIES SHOULD TEMPT YOU TO COME AND SHARE THOSE GOOD THINGS THAT MAKE LIFE HERE SO DELIGHTFUL. IT IS SENT TO YOU BY THE STATE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION AT CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE. SUBSCRIPTION: 50 CENTS A YEAR

DONALD TUTTLE, EDITOR

VOLUME XII | *April, 1942* | NUMBER 1

COVERED BRIDGES ALONG THE PEMIGEWASSET RIVER

by Eva A. Speare

All bridge photos by George C. Clark

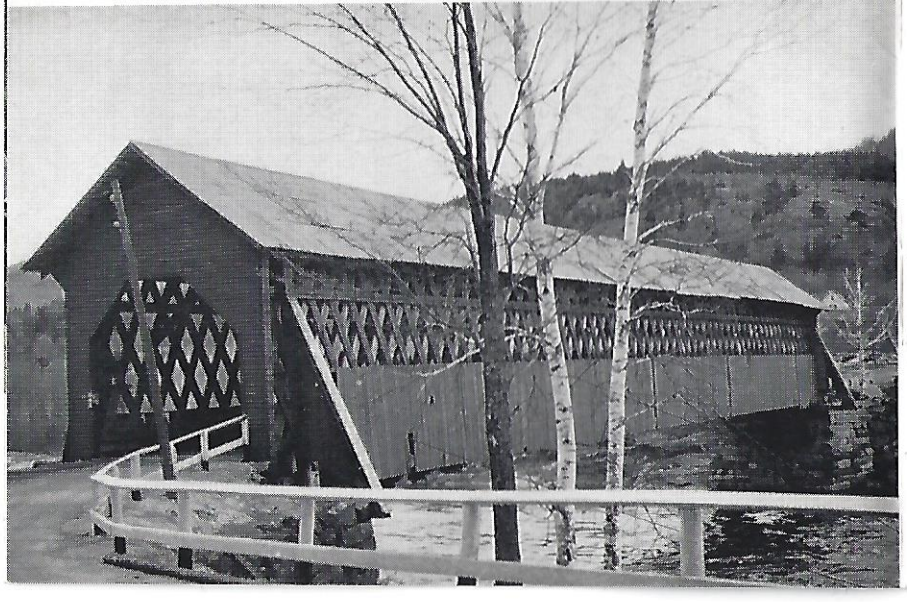
COLLECTING PHOTOGRAPHS of covered bridges is a hobby that gains an increasing number of adherents annually. Each member of this cult hopes to surpass his rivals with the accomplishments of a summer of discoveries. Frequently an inquirer calls for directions to obscure specimens on unfrequented by-ways where the rural landscape provides a perfect New England vista. Astonishing as the fact seems, not one of these artists desires to know anything about a bridge except its location. Perhaps one may be pardoned for expressing the opinion that such collectors have yet to learn what it means to become addicted to covered bridges. The bona-fide enthusiast not only photographs the outside and inside of a bridge, he is also willing to scramble down river banks, through thorny bushes, to study the supporting abutments and piers; he debates about the type of the construction of the walls and roof,

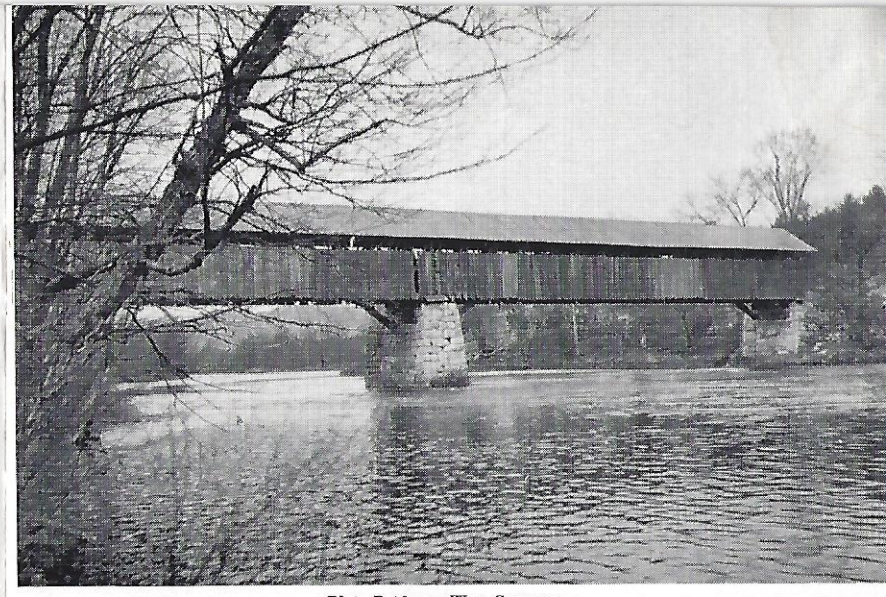
and even speculates about the possible force of the wind and currents that may endanger the structure.

New Hampshire offers complete satisfaction for the pursuit of this hobby. To follow it to the greatest advantage, the study should begin at the northern part of the state and work toward the south, because the older and more interesting structures remain in the north. For an accessible beginning, the valley of the Pemigewasset River is recommended. There are specimens of unusual types that have withstood the floods of recent decades.

At the Flume Reservation is a small but attractive bridge, built with X-braces between the upright posts, or so-called panels of its walls. Ten miles south in Woodstock is a latticed bridge reinforced with a laminated arch, erected in 1878. Previously four successive bridges had been washed away from this site because the force of the spring "freshets" had undermined the central pier. Finally a committee of three of the town-fathers, after intensive

Latticed bridge at Woodstock





Blair Bridge at West Campton

investigation, decided that they would eliminate the troublesome central pier by adopting the lattice truss that had been patented by Ithiel Town of Connecticut in 1835, but they would reinforce the resistance to the thrust of the bridge with a long, laminated arch. A half century has proved that these citizens exercised sound judgment in their experiment in rural engineering.

Ten miles further south, another even more worth-while specimen may be seen. To find this bridge at Blair, it is necessary to turn toward the river from the Daniel Webster Highway near the famous "Traveler's Inn" in Campton; even so the few rods of extra driving well repay for the slight detour. This Blair Bridge is doubly interesting; — first, for its historical location; second, because the construction of its framework is most unusual among covered

Interior of Blair Bridge

bridges of the present day, a probable inheritance from a century and a half ago.

When the town of Campton was incorporated in 1767, the seat of its government was not far from the east end of the present bridge. There the first meeting-house was erected, and in the ancient cemetery near by the moss covered, slate headstones mark the graves of the founders. During the summer, the river was easily forded at this spot, yet in the rainy seasons the crossing was dangerous. For this reason, after the fertile meadows on both banks of the river had been cleared for farms, the town was divided into two parishes, the Eastside and the Westside.

A meeting-house was built near the ford on the west bank, and a second one on the hill several miles to the east.

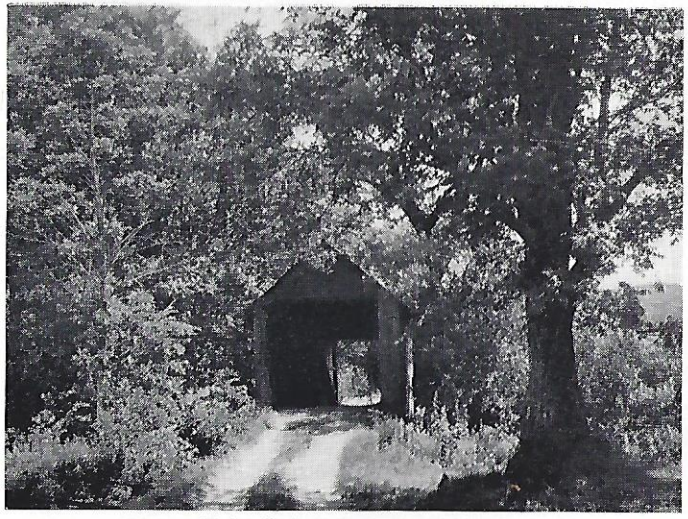
One Sabbath morning in the spring of 1827, the service of worship in the Westside meeting was rudely interrupted by a breathless messenger who called for help to rescue a man from the rushing river. When the preacher and entire congregation arrived at the ford, they saw a man precariously clinging to a branch of an overhanging tree that he had miraculously grasped. Joy was mingled with consternation, after the rescue was safely accomplished, when everyone recognized that the drenched victim was their well loved physician of Campton, Dr. Kimball, who had risked the ford on his horse in answer to a call to the bedside of a suffering patient. The horse was carried down stream and was drowned.

Aroused by this near tragedy, the citizens determined that a long desired bridge must be immediately built, and the funds were soon provided by private subscriptions. It was completed in 1828.

The framework of this bridge bears close inspection. Its trusses will furnish a topic for considerable guesswork. Where did the carpenters of the Pemigewasset Valley find this design for their bridges? Anyone is invited to join in this debate. The "Pont Lafayette" in Plymouth was erected with this same design in 1826, and three more bridges of like construction were built: — the village and the Quincy bridges in Rumney, and the Smith Bridge in Plymouth. All five bridges have laminated arches, which seems to indicate that they were a part of the original plans, although in many places, such arches have been added to reinforce the walls of aging covered bridges. The plans resemble the designs that Theodore Burr of Connecticut invented in 1804, and after many improvements, patented in 1817. Yet the Blair Bridge is an improvement to the Burr truss. A study of the structures that Timothy Palmer — perhaps the most famous engineer of early New England — built above the lower reaches of the Piscataqua and the Merrimack in the 1790's, furnish some clues. Mr. Palmer and his partner, Jacob Spofford, built bridges and also framed buildings in New Hampshire. It is not too improbable to conjecture that the Blair Bridge is copied from their principles of engineering.

The carpenters of Campton planned more wisely than they perceived in their lifetime. With the common sense of pioneers, they set their abutments high above the surrounding flood plain while they fashioned them and the central pier of shapely blocks of granite. The usual sharp angle of the pier projects against the current to force the ice and debris to either side. This bridge has stood a hundred and fifteen years, has resisted the "Great Freshet" in 1869, the still higher flood in 1927, and the hurricane storm in 1936.

One short covered bridge connects the Island Farm, locally known as "Turkey Jim's," to the mainland in West Campton. The very early queen-post arch is found here, although the cover appears to be an afterthought. In the period in which such trusses



Turkey Jim's Bridge, West Campton

were built, their timbers were often covered with boards, leaving the remainder of the structure exposed to the weather. Although the farm was completely flooded in 1927, and thousands of turkeys were drowned, fortunately the old bridge which hangs above a narrow off-shoot of the river, escaped the full force of the current and remains the sole survivor of several contemporaries in this vicinity.

These four specimens of covered bridges supply the basis for an intensive study into a fascinating hobby; all are within the space of twenty miles, require slight expense in gasoline and tires, yet they offer more architecture, history, folk-lore, and beauty than a month of summer pleasure can complete.

THE LITTLE SQUIRT

by Leonard F. Hubbard

THERE are some of us, neither young nor middle-aged yet, who still must satisfy a congenital curiosity by attempting everything new and different that looks interesting. Dickens' admonition that "you are too old, sir, and too fat, sir" is not welcome. Maybe we haven't appeared at Wimbledon, but we still play a good game of tennis singles; we don't beat the club champion at squash, but we make him earn his trophies. That same fundamental truth holds good for ping pong, swimming or most any other healthy pastime.

Having returned, right through brash adolescence, a perpetual response to those annoying daredevils who "Betcha can't do this," we have now ventured our talents in the precarious art of remaining in a vertical plane on skis while tearing down snow-packed slopes like the Cannonball Express without benefit of governor.

If we, as a sociological type, suffer at all, it is only in our pride, which goeth after every fall. At the Sunapee ski tow, mine suffered grievously. It was a redheaded little squirt, probably age 8, who put me in my place — for the moment, at the bottom of the scale of human society.

I had gone up on the ski tow. You know what they are like. You grasp a moving rope which tears your arms from their sockets and deposits you quickly at the summit, where your feet join you shortly. I admired the magnificent view, until the crucial moment of shoving off on skis to those regions barely discernible below could not longer be postponed and still allow me a vestige of self-respect. It was a children's practice slope, to be sure, but a person unschooled in crystalline navigation necessarily feels all the thrills of a pioneer parachute jump.

For the first hundred yards, I thought of the view; for the next, of the view I might never see again. "The impact," I thought,

WINSTON POTE

Tuckerman Ravine floor looking down from the top of the headwall, Mount Washington, White Mountain National Forest. Yes, those dots are skiers. Here spring skiing frequently lasts into June.

"varies with the square of the velocity or something, and I hope there are no rocks at the foot of this precipice." Meantime, my substantial tonnage launched me over the crusted brow faster than you can say "Gelandersprungenubung."

I don't know what happened. Maybe the engine-room telegraph was sabotaged. Left Foot started for George's Mills; Right Foot headed for Newbury. Anyway, it was a comfortable landing. I was relaxing in the snow crater so informally manufactured when I saw

the Little Squirt coming down the track. As I sat there, he was right on eye-level with me, and he glared when he slid smoothly past.

"Darn these people that sit down halfway over the hill!" he yelled contemptuously to the next urchin skiing gleefully behind him. Oh, if there were only a shingle handy. . . .

AMERICA'S ALPS

by Norvin H. Collins

To most of us the word "Switzerland" connotes fertile green valleys girded about with towering peaks whose stony ramparts reach across the timberline into eternal snows. It is a symbol of an ideal — peaceful fertility nestled safely in the bosom of beauty, majesty, and eternity.

The popularity of such recent best sellers as "Lost Horizon" and "How Green Was My Valley" attest to man's natural love of mountain retreats whether they be in the Himalayas, Welsh Hills, Swiss Alps, or New England Appalachians.

In Yankeedom's Green and White Mountains, America's Appalachian Chain finds its closest approximation to truly Alpine characteristics.

Many of the higher summits soar above the timberline where granite shoulders and domes bare their naked beauty to sun and moon, or majestically mantle themselves with ermine in the winter season.

Scores of green valleys, of which Franconia Notch and Dixville Notch are only two, form ideal "Shangrilas" where smart travellers can easily do James Hilton one better and really "get away from it all." And when you say au revoir to this most ancient part of America, you will be feeling years younger and looking as you feel. There's nothing lost about these New England horizons.

A HOME IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

by Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Hallas

We climbed our first New Hampshire mountain October 12, 1926. The mountain was Chocorua, and it was one of those clear, crisp fall days when one can see for a hundred miles. Mt. Washington, forty miles to the north, was covered with snow and glistened like a diamond in the bright sunshine.

This experience so thrilled us that we decided to spend all our spare time in other climbing adventures. For over twelve years we climbed, — all the way from Monadnock to Magalloway.

Becoming so intimately acquainted with the eternal hills (added to the inspiration derived from the "Troubadour" each month) gave us the desire to own a place in the New Hampshire hills with the hope that some day we might live there permanently.

After some months of searching for a place that would fill our particular needs, we bought an 85-acre farm with a 100-year old house and began alterations, being careful not to change the original lines of the house. We did, however, lift the face of the old

wagon shed in order to accommodate the modern vehicle. "Feathered" clapboards were replaced where necessary; the 395 panes of glass were reset; the entire house wire-brushed, and gallons of paint and pounds of putty produced remarkable results.

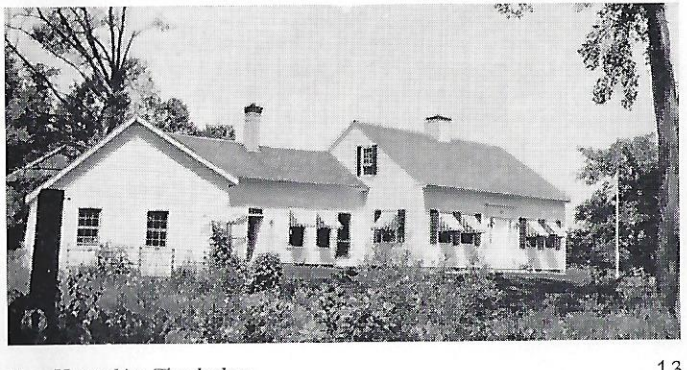
The chimney was restored to its original size as there were three fireplaces. We were told by the grandson of the "bride" for whom the house was built in 1832 that the chimney was torn down in 1887 to furnish bricks for the arch in the sugar house. This sugar house also has been restored and is used each spring for syrup making.

The addition of a porch on the back of the house, overlooking the "friendly range," is our delight. Meals served there are thoroughly enjoyed and the coloring of the reflected sunsets is soul-inspiring.

A babbling brook flows through the woods one hundred yards from the house and a fine "swimming hole" is enjoyed by all.

Our place is in the town of Hillsboro, near the village of East Washington, which nestles at the foot of Mt. Lovewell.

It is our opinion that New Hampshire supplies the answer to those who have "nerves" and is the place that recreates both mind and body.



FRONT COVER: Fishing in the Souhegan River near Wilton.

BACK COVER: Summer residence of the Author, Marion Nichol Rawson, East Alstead. Both photos by Harold Orne.

The Bureau of Markets, State Department of Agriculture, Concord, recently issued two pamphlets which are of interest to all lovers of maple products. One contains a list of New Hampshire Producers. The other "Care and Use of Maple Syrup" contains some recipes for using maple sweets in cooking. They will be sent free on request.

New Hampshire has about two hundred summer camps for boys and girls. A list of these and near-by hotels will be sent on request.

Driving along a back road last summer a car full of antique collectors were surprised to see on the porch of an old house a little old lady in a rocking chair that would be a prize in any antique shop. They stopped, asked for some unneeded road instructions and succeeded in getting invited inside. When about to leave an hour later they gently broached the subject of buying the rocker. "Oh, no," said the old lady, "I wouldn't think of selling it at any price. It has been in my family more than a hundred years and besides if I ever get lonely, all I have to do is to sit out on the porch in this chair and I always have plenty of company."

Planning a vacation? Our 32-page vacation book "New Hampshire" contains a number of suggestions.

We are indebted to Mr. Fred L. Trask of New York City for a copy of a letter he recently wrote Joe Dodge, Huts Manager of the A.M.C. Every White Mountain lover knows Joe and will join us in applauding this quotation from Mr. Trask's letter:

"Throughout these books I have referred to, Joe, are many names mentioned, of those who gave much to make this region accessible. But I doubt if when the history of the White Mountains is finally written that there is anyone who has contributed more to bring this great outdoors to the countless thousands than you have, and the purpose of this whole letter is to express my appreciation for what you have done.

"Many thanks, Joe, and more power to you for many years to come for the noble work that you have done to further popularize the White Mountains."

ABOUT FACE

UNA W. HARSEN

in *New York Times*

This is no time to let age have its way,
To sit serene and idle in the sun
And watch the shadows of the afternoon
Draw to the twilight of the closing day.

We must renew the tasks we thought were done,
Set hand again to plow and wheel and lathe,
Force tired feet to climb the upward path,
Turn weary eyes to face the rising sun.

The past — it is a story that is told.
The future lies within our steadfast keeping;
Today belongs to toil, not sighs and weeping.
This is our day — we who are growing old

New Hampshire plays host this summer to the biennial meeting of the General Council of Congregational Christian churches in the United States, convening at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire, June 18 to 25, with some 1,500 laymen, laywomen, and clergy from all over America in attendance.

This conference has peculiar significance for New England because this is the birthplace of Congregationalism in America. The roots of the Congregational churches run deep into New England soil. Not a few of these ancient Houses of God are in New Hampshire and they form veritable shrines for those who realize the contributions to democracy which these early members of the Pilgrim churches made. The teachings of New England churches have been woven into the very warp and woof of America's moral fibre.

"The fact that I spent nearly twenty years of my boyhood in New Hampshire may help to explain why the *Troubadour* means so much to me now that I am living where there are no mountains and no long purple shadows of leafless trees on clean snow, as pictured in the frontispiece of the January issue."
— Edwin O. Grover, Winter Park, Florida

FULFILLMENT

by Frederick W. Branch

The man who built this house of mine
A hundred years ago,
With Christian doors of smooth, clear pine
And chestnut timbers, row on row,
Whose oxen hauled the bricks and lime,
Who squared the hearth's broad stone,
Could not foresee that Fate and Time
Would some day make it all my own.

He must have known that it would stay
Here, on its sturdy sills,
Long after his last Spring should lay
Her fragrant mornings on the hills:
So, even if he didn't know
Just who its owners were to be,
I'll still maintain that, years ago,
He planned and built this house for me.

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